

Young and realistic? A transnational case for critical language awareness in climate and energy education

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Abstract-

This study examines how to help university students translate climate concern into support for energy transition policies, with specific anchoring to Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG 7) and Climate Action (SDG 13). Using survey data from Argentina, Denmark, Italy, Spain, and the United States (n=404), we find near-universal agreement among young people that climate change is human-driven, yet markedly weaker and differentiated support for specific decarbonization policies. Our multivariate regression analyses show that policy support is shaped less by personal beliefs than by how energy and climate policies are framed: perceived health co-benefits consistently raise support, while economic harm narratives suppress it. Together, the findings suggest that the gap between climate concern and action is partly due to a lack of energy literacy, which, we argue, might be ameliorated with critical language awareness (CLA). We present a three-part energy literacy intervention that is grounded in CLA and designed to build students' capacity to interrogate the construals, trade-offs, and distributional claims embedded in climate and energy discourse, and to connect these to credible, agency-oriented everyday practices bridging SDG 7 and SDG 13.

Index Terms- climate action, critical language awareness, energy literacy, energy transitions, sustainability pedagogies, sustainable development goals, university teaching and learning

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